

Dear Healthy Home Habitats,

I'm using too much plastic to store food in my kitchen! I know that it's not healthy for the planet or my family. But we are on a tight budget and glass food storage containers are crazy expensive. What's A Better Option?

*Signed,
Plastic Leftovers*

Dear Plastic Leftovers,

You are right to be concerned. Not only is our so-called “plastic recycling” failing; “Only 9% of all the plastic waste ever created has been recycled.” <https://tinyurl.com/2scsvhwa>. But there are numerous concerns regarding chemical exposure from all of the different types of plastic we use to store, microwave and freeze our food. While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rigorously tests plastic food packaging stating “Plastic food and beverage containers may be used safely in the freezer, microwave, dishwasher or a combination of all three when these uses are labeled on the package.” As we all know, there are increasing concerns of chemical migration, cumulative exposure and endocrine disruptors potentially released by plastic food containers by heating and over time. “Dr. Leo Trasande, director of the Center for the Investigation of Environmental Hazards at New York University’s Grossman School of Medicine states ‘there are clearly still gaps in our knowledge’ about how large a role food packaging plays in our everyday exposure to thousands of chemicals. Still, ‘there is sufficient evidence that exposure to these chemicals is problematic’”. <https://tinyurl.com/2scsvhwa>

“Glass is superior to plastic for food storage because it is:

- non-porous, meaning that it won’t transfer food smells
- keeps foods safe (without leaching any harmful material into them)
- reduces landfill waste
- saves money
- easy to clean
- (Lasts much longer than plastic.)” <https://tinyurl.com/ra96hetx>

So, one easy and thrifty approach is to reuse the glass jars that store the food products you buy regularly. The “catch” for us is to choose & use only three sizes. Too many different lids can get crazy! Experiment to determine which glass container sizes are convenient for your family’s food storage needs combined with what food you like to eat! An example set of three are:

- Bubbies Sauerkraut or Tostitos Salsa’ glass jars (25 oz.)
- Artichoke Salad/Quartered Artichokes glass jars (12 oz.)
- Pesto glass jars (6.7 oz.) and the

Remove the labels with soap and hot water. We use ours not only for food storage, but for microwaving and freezing as well. Don’t forget to use a permanent marker to label the contents or

you'll end up with a freezer and fridge full of jars of indiscernible muck! The marker scrubs off with soap after each use. And remember that these containers are not safe for food canning purposes.

Caveats to Freezing:

1. Use only straight-sided glass jars,
2. Leave 1" at the top for liquids to expand.
3. Let the contents completely cool in the refrigerator overnight before placing the jars in the freezer.

With this approach you're doing at least double-fabulous for the planet and your budget: #1 glass for your health and #2 reuse of containers you've already purchased!

Hope this helps!

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Please share with us what other healthy, sustainable, and thrifty methods you have discovered on this topic as well!

Additional ideas on the topic:

<https://www.honestlymodern.com/how-to-clean-and-reuse-glass-jars-for-everyday-use/>

<http://mydearirene.com/2017/03/25/the-19-ways-i-reuse-food-glass-jars-around-my-home/>

*Michele Chalice is the owner of Keene-based, **Healthy Home Habitats** (HHH). She is a bit obsessed with experimenting and sharing ideas to decrease household resource consumption as well as designing eco-friendly landscapes. HHH's household goals are to maintain more health, reduce costs and chemical exposures, provide more peace and collectively help to heal our world from home. See more at <https://HealthyHomeHabitats.com/> & @healthyhomehabitats*